

businesses that need the help the most. It is really more targeted this time. It is targeted relief for some of our hardest hit industries, including our airlines and our mass transit industry.

It includes funds to help those Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own—the unemployment insurance extension that I talked about earlier. As a bridge to normalcy, we need this funding. It provides funds for State, local, and Tribal governments based on their revenue shortfalls or their expenses due to COVID—in other words, needs-based.

We are also working on commonsense liability reforms to give businesses, nonprofits, schools, healthcare providers, religious organizations, and others the legal protection they need to reopen with the confidence that they are not going to be subjected to frivolous lawsuits that could put them out of business. That is really important because getting these businesses back up and running is a critical part of getting our economy through these next few months. In my view, these protections are essential.

I am hopeful that both sides can now come together and find common ground on liability protections that we can all support. Several of my colleagues are working on a proposal here, right now, in the U.S. Senate. All of this gives us hope that we will have better days around the corner.

By the way, this proposal is not what any of us would write. It is not the proposal I would write. It is not the proposal our Presiding Officer, who is here in the Chamber, would write. Personally, I would put more emphasis on tax incentives for hiring. We have some good proposals for that. I would put tax incentives in place to get businesses to reopen safely—one called the healthy workplaces tax credit so they could get compensated for putting up the partitions or for having the PPE and providing safer work environments. I would expand the work opportunity tax credit to help those, again, who are on the sidelines in order to bring them back to work through a credit. I would help with regard to the employee retention credit, which was in the CARES Act, that could pick up some of these companies that aren't picked up by the PPP program, companies that have slightly more employees, let's say, so that they don't otherwise qualify.

So there is more I would like to do, but do you know what? This proposal is needed. It is needed so badly that, of course, all of us, regardless of our particular interests or our particular ideas, know it is right, and all of us should get behind it. Let's not make the perfect the enemy of the good—I would even say the enemy of the necessary. Targeted relief now, I think, is the right approach.

Most importantly, all of these significant economic problems I laid out and the healthcare crisis I laid out need to be addressed now. As I said ear-

lier, there is a light at the end of the tunnel for the health side of this crisis, and our proposal that I have been talking about also helps us get there because it has more funding for vaccine development and vaccine distribution. I talked today to some experts in that area who know a lot more about it than I do, and they said it is necessary. We actually have to provide more funding to keep the vaccine train moving so that, by March and April, we will have it widely available. Again, my hope is that Americans will step up and be vaccinated.

By the way, there is also bipartisan legislation that four of us introduced last week—two Republicans, two Democrats—to provide for a public service campaign, not with politicians talking about the importance, as I am doing tonight, but with the experts talking about why the science says that it is a good idea to get vaccinated—again, just like we do for smallpox or polio or the measles.

Will another COVID-19 bill solve every problem we face right now? No, but we could do a lot with this proposal to help the most vulnerable individuals just get by for the next several months rather than slip into poverty, rather than miss out on mortgage payments or miss out on their rent, miss out on their car payments, and other bad outcomes. We can help the most vulnerable businesses keep their lights on and their employees on payroll. Frankly, this is work we should have been doing months ago, but we are here now. Let's get it done.

My hope is that we can end this year by recapturing that spirit of bipartisanship that was on display in March of this year when we passed the CARES package here in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 96 to nothing. That doesn't happen very often. The CARES Act was not a perfect bill either, but we all recognized it was a bill needed for the moment. I hope we can also recognize that another bill is needed now even if it is not perfect. Let's build on the bipartisan proposal we have put forward, and let's ensure that the people we represent get the targeted economic relief they desperately need in the coming months.

Folks, let's not leave for the holidays until we have done that.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO TOM UDALL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, when Senator TOM UDALL announced last year that he would not seek reelection, he said, "The worst thing anyone in public office can do is believe the office belongs to them, rather than to the people they represent." Throughout his more than three decades of service to his State and to our Nation, TOM has demonstrated time and again his adherence to that principle. As New Mexico's attorney general, Congressman, and Senator, he has always treated public office as a public trust.

Everyone who serves in this Chamber takes an oath to support and defend our Constitution. That remarkable document begins with three words TOM lives by, "We the People."

That commitment to our Constitution was put to the test in early 2019 when the President issued an emergency declaration that diverted \$ 3.6 billion from 127 military construction projects that Congress duly approved and funded and the President had signed into law. TOM stood strong against this clear violation of the separation of powers doctrine that is so vital to our enduring Republic, and I was proud to stand with him.

In a powerful floor statement on the resolution we introduced to overturn the emergency declaration, TOM got right to the point. He said:

This is no longer about the president's wall. This is not about party. This is about protecting the very heart of our American system of governance. Congress—and only Congress—holds the power of the purse.

TOM also made clear that this encroachment upon Congress's authority was not an isolated incident but part of a dangerous pattern Congress has permitted over many decades and under many Presidents. And make no mistake—the hyperpartisanship that afflicts Congress far too often aids and abets this lamentable historical trend. By pursuing a bipartisan response to this Executive overreach, TOM helped to make real progress in defending the separation of powers.

It has been a pleasure to work with Tom on many other issues over the years. From land conservation and environmental protection to rural health care and pandemic relief, he has been an informed and effective legislative partner.

TOM leaves the Senate with an impressive record of accomplishments. Even more important, he leaves a legacy of reverence for our Constitution and courage in defending it. I thank him for his service to the people of our Nation and wish him well in the years to come.

REMEMBERING ERNIE BAPTISTA

• Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, we recently lost a great Rhode Islander, Ernie Baptista.

Ernie was immensely successful in his professional life; his wise counsel was sought not just around the country but around the globe. Ernie was also a civic-minded community leader at home, with a passion for politics. He immersed himself in Rhode Island's political whirl, where he was well liked and well regarded by people of many different political perspectives. Ernie's keen insight and advice was relied upon by many candidates, including myself and Senator REED. We both treasured Ernie's quick wit, sharp intellect, and great sense of humor. He was bright, insightful, and loyal and always provided wise counsel.

Ernie enjoyed the good things in life: good friends, good meals, and good